

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. Coast Guard

AIS Regulations Issued July 1, 2003

On July 1, 2003, the Coast Guard published regulations requiring all vessels subject to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention and certain domestic vessels operating in Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) areas to install a ship-board AIS.

AIS stands for Automatic Identification System. It is a shipboard broadcast system that acts like a continuous and autonomous transponder, operating in the VHF maritime band. It allows ships to easily track, identify, and, exchange pertinent navigation information from one another or ashore; for collision avoidance, security and VTS reporting.

These following commercial domestic vessels, while transiting areas detailed below, must have an installed, operational AIS that complies with the standards for such devices adopted internationally and approved by the Coast Guard.

- Each self-propelled vessel of 65 feet or more in length, engaged in commercial service (including fishing)
- Each towing vessel of 26 feet or more in length and more than 600 horsepower
- Each vessel of 100 gross tons or more carrying one or more passengers for hire
- Each passenger vessel certificated to carry 50 or more passengers for hire

These vessels must comply according to the following schedule when using the listed Vessel Traffic Systems or Vessel Movement Reporting Systems:

- VTS St. Mary's River, MI; no later than December 31, 2003
- VTS Berwick Bay, LA; VMRS Los Angeles/Long Beach; VTS Lower Mississippi River; VTS Port Arthur, TX; VTS Prince William Sound, AK; no later than July 1, 2004
- VTS Houston-Galveston; VTS New York; VTS Puget Sound, WA; VTS San Francisco; no later than December 31, 2004

More information, including schedules for internationally bound vessels, can be found at www.navcen.uscg.gov/enav/ais/default.htm.

The complete AIS temporary interim rule issued on July 1 was published in the Federal Register and is available at <http://dms.dot.gov>, docket number USCG-2003-14757. The Coast Guard is accepting written comments on the regulations until July 31, 2003.